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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5776
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 004786

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/12/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#)

SUBJECT: FATAH REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL NAMES ABBAS GENERAL
COMMANDER

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: On November 12, the Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) named President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) the General Commander of Fatah. That makes Abu Mazen the formal leader of the Fatah movement and represents a political victory over the Secretary General, Farouq al-Qadummi. The FRC also created a field committee to oversee Fatah organizational structures in the West Bank and one in Gaza and placed Abu Mazen in direct control of both. End Summary.

ABBAS GENERAL COMMANDER OF FATAH

12. (C) On the second of three days of meeting, the Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) named PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) the General Commander of Fatah, a vacant position last held by former President Yasser Arafat. In a discussion with ConGen FSN political specialist, FRC member Mohammad Madani described the FRC decision as a vote of confidence in Abu Mazen and his policies by Fatah. Madani also said the appointment is a political victory for Abu Mazen over Farouq al-Qadummi, who has been the Secretary General of Fatah since Arafat's death in 2004. Madani and other high-ranking Fatah officials note that al-Qadummi and Abu Mazen have been engaged in a struggle over the past year to define who is the leader of the Fatah movement. These officials argue that the FRC decision places Abu Mazen firmly in that leadership role. Qadummi has not responded publicly to the FRC decision yet. (Note: The last scheduled meeting of the Fatah Central Committee on October 17 did not take place, largely because of the power struggle between Abu Mazen and Qadummi. Following that non-event, Abu Mazen said it was the last time the FCC would meet outside the territories, effectively excluding Qadummi from FCC meetings. End Note.)

FATAH GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION

13. (C) The FRC also created field committees to oversee Fatah organizational structures in both the West Bank and Gaza. (Comment: PLC member Mohammed Dahlan had previously told us about this proposal and said that he had obtained Abu Mazen's approval and expected the FRC to launch publicly the committees. Dahlan said the purpose of these committees would be to limit the power of the FCC at the grassroots level. End Note.) Madani and other FRC officials noted that the FRC placed this committee under Abu Mazen's leadership. Madani explained that this new structure puts Abu Mazen in direct touch with the Fatah grassroots for the first time. This new arrangement could create a more organized and centralized Fatah movement. Madani added that the details of the plan, including composition of the committees, will be worked out later in the week after Abu Mazen returns from a visit to Jordan. (Note: He departed Ramallah November 12 and we expect him to return o/a November 15. End Note.) Madani also noted that the field committees are intended to be temporary pending internal Fatah party elections.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

14. (C) Madani and other Fatah leaders added that the FRC has also decided to reshuffle the portfolios held by various Fatah Central Committee (FCC) members, and to create three new portfolios: refugees, security and Jerusalem. The FRC members also agreed to work towards holding the Fatah Sixth Conference -- at which a new FCC will be elected -- in the first half of 2007.

WALLES